

Press Release

19th July 2018

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



GREATWOOD LAUNCHES INNOVATIVE NEW PROGRAMME FOR THOSE EXPERIENCING THE EFFECTS OF THE IMPACT OF TRAUMA INCLUDING PTSD



What is H.O.P.E™?

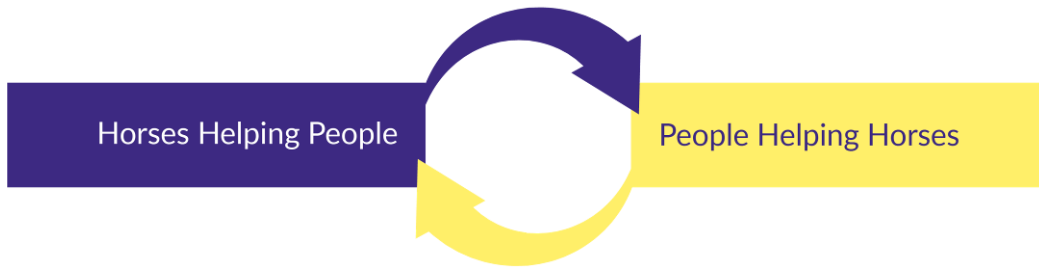
Horses
Opportunities
Progression
Employment

Greatwood has piloted a new suite of educational programmes in 2018. H.O.P.E™ focuses on addressing the effects of trauma (including PTSD), aiming to promote Post-Traumatic Growth and personal development. The courses are for, but not limited to, serving and former armed services personnel, reservists, emergency services workers and their families.

The inclusive, interactive and learner focused environment at Greatwood is used as a vehicle for self-development and progression. By utilising Thoroughbred horses, a range of other animals as well as our sensory and vegetable gardens, we work together to support a wide range of personalised targets. These include improved self-esteem, psychological wellbeing and communication skills; in addition to qualifications and experiences that support career transition and instil a belief in a positive future.

Although the learners at Greatwood often face common themes, individual factors are supported by well trained staff. The H.O.P.E™ series of programmes are specifically aimed at all those living with the effects of trauma and build on existing programmes of work shown to be of therapeutic value. Both former racehorses and former service personnel have experienced a high level of training and discipline, together with a strict regime. Reintegration into domestic and/or civilian life can present significant challenges. Greatwood recognises that the empathy felt between horse and human can foster the positive growth of self-esteem and identity. This can in turn be used as a stepping stone for the exploration, creation and development of new life possibilities and career paths.

This reflects the cycle of rehabilitation and change.



HOW CAN H.O.P.E™ HELP?

Although tailored to individual needs, the H.O.P.E™ programmes fall broadly into three complementary and interchangeable areas:

- **Improving Emotional and Physical Wellbeing**
- **Supporting Career Recovery or Progression**
- **Promotion of Post-Traumatic Growth**

Our well-developed programmes of equine assisted education provide opportunities to:

- Improve self-confidence and personal esteem
- Reduce symptoms of post-traumatic and other stress
- Improve psychological health
- Access peer support
- Engage families
- Enhance reintegration into civilian life
- Gain new qualifications
- Develop transferrable employability skills
- Introduce solid possibilities for employment in the equine sector

MIKE'S STORY

Without any previous experience with horses, former-serviceman Mike joined Greatwood in 2015. He spent a few months as a volunteer but is now an integral part of the full-time team at the charity.

“Working here has provided me with new skills; gaining knowledge with Thoroughbreds and small animals. It has given me a renewed sense of purpose as well as a new career path that I would never have considered before coming to Greatwood.”



TOM'S STORY

Working in bomb disposal during the Rhodesian Civil War (Zimbabwe War of Liberation), Tom is no stranger to trauma and its lasting effects. He is a key member of an established local group where, although not every member is a military veteran, members share their difficulties with others who have been through traumatic experiences. Tom was referred to us by the Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership and found the inclusive and supportive environment created during the project especially helpful: *"I opened up to all of you and was treated with dignity and respect but most of all compassion.....it (the H.O.P.E™ project) provided me with social interaction and has been helpful for networking with others in similar circumstances."*

Tom also found the interaction with animals (through real-world care routines such as grooming) a particularly powerful aspect of the programme: *"I haven't found joy like this for a long, long while. It has rekindled my love of animals; I found empathy, compassion and understanding from everyone including the animals."*

I got huge benefit personally from escaping from "life" for a while. My closeness and tenderness to all the horses, donkeys, chickens, puppy and dog was an amazing experience. It (the project) gave me hope and a better grounding of myself.... It's a great way to mindfulness."

Tom also successfully completed an accredited Level 1 qualification which was assessed using strategies which were carefully differentiated for individual learners: *"I found the photographs (of myself engaging in an activity) particularly useful. I think they are an integral part of everyone's recovery this week. Its evidence based, it showed me that this really is me here and I was able to look at myself smiling for the first time in many years."*

And Tom's final thoughts: *"I would definitely recommend the H.O.P.E. project to others. I think more people should get to know about it."*



LINDA'S STORY

Linda is currently being supported by a local women's aid charity. When she first arrived at Greatwood she felt it was very unlikely that she would be able to conquer her fears and even get close enough to touch our imposing former racehorses. Two days into the H.O.P.E™ pilot project and Linda was not only confident in grooming and leading the Thoroughbreds but had also formed a special, and supportive, bond with twelve-year-old Aldaado.

Linda has received cognitive behavioural therapy as treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) but now feels it is time for her to actively construct a new career pathway for herself. After having spent time with the Thoroughbreds, she is now considering enrolling on our vocational programmes as a further stepping stone towards a career in the equine industry.



JAKUB'S STORY

Jakub has lived in England for a number of years, working part-time in a garage. For some time, he believed that the only way he could cope with his acute stress and feelings of isolation was through drinking alcohol to excess. Earlier this year he began proactively seeking support for his addiction, and associated mental health problems, and was referred by the local drug and alcohol service to MIND where a community wellbeing support worker suggested he could benefit from taking part in the H.O.P.E project. Although Jakub has had very little contact with animals since he was a child, he quickly acquired a new set of skills and put them to excellent use caring for our Thoroughbred horses (and additionally gaining an accredited qualification). Yard staff commented that he had a natural empathy for the horses and clearly they had a great impact on him.

"I have a problem with contact and communication with people. Through the Greatwood team and the horses, I have been able to clearly read body language, which has made it easier to interact."

Jakub also enjoyed working in a small group and listening to the life stories shared by others. He believes the experience has increased both his self-confidence and esteem; he became very motivated and engaged fully with every aspect of the programme.

"Usually if I attend a course or go somewhere, I normally only stay for a couple of hours. I have been able to come in every day of the course. I would definitely recommend the H.O.P.E™ to others"

He now feels he would like his life to go in a completely new direction and is planning to make time around work commitments, to volunteer at Greatwood and possibly to begin our land-based course in September as a first step towards a whole new career.

ENDS.

For photographs from our extensive library, interviews or more information, contact Sasha Thorbek on 01672 514535. sasha.thorbek-hooper@greatwoodcharity.org



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Racing Together



Greatwood Charity

Rainscombe Hill Farm

Clench Common

Marlborough

Wiltshire

SN8 4DT

Tel: 01672 514535

www.greatwoodcharity.org

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